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It Seemed Good.

It seemed good, is the authority which the Apostles and elders at Jerusalem gave for sending a decision to the Gentile Brethren about the matter of enforcing the rite of circumcision upon them. "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us," says the historical account in the Acts of the Apostles. Here the Holy Ghost is represented as a party in deciding what was best to do, or at least in what seemed good.

Here we have a decision made after a council was held, and it was not for the purpose of binding burdens upon others but for the purpose of saying that certain burdens should not be placed upon other disciples. This is one of the several cases of decisions given in the New Testament which are on the side of mercy and liberty.

When the disciples came to Jesus, telling how they had forbidden a man who was doing acts in his name, his decision was to let him alone, for the one who was for him could not be against him. Here is a principle that should be held in high esteem and never be forgotten. Those who will work for us are not against us, and when they understand us properly, they will not do any thing that will injure us, knowingly. It is not only unchristian, but cruel to censure a friend who is doing all he can for us in the best way that his knowledge and understanding directs him.

In all cases of this nature, it is most important to be careful about private judgment. We believe the right of private judgment or individual interpretation belongs to every person, whether Christian, infidel or heathen. But to make individual interpretation the unalterable law in every case, is perilous; and to deny the right of private judgment altogether is tyrannical and ungodly in the strongest degree.

Every man has the right to exercise private judgment in the choice of the religious society to which he unites himself with, but after the choice is once made, he has no right to insist on any private interpretations at war with the established usages and laws of the society he enters. Every church or society must have certain fundamental principles and laws and ordinances, which are essential to its growth and development; and to insist on the right of private interpretation contrary to such known principles, laws and ordinances is simply suicidal. If these oppose his private judgment,

he is at liberty to stay out; or having come in, to go out; and he has no right to stay in and make a fight against any truth, principle, ordinance, law or custom which is fundamental and vital in that society. The sprinkler might come into the Brethren church and insist on private judgment on the ordinance of baptism, but he would have no right to do it and would transcend his privileges and make himself a vicious enemy to the whole church. Again we believe that it is a known and established fundamental principle of the Brethren church that a meal constitutes a part of the Lord's Supper; but this principle does not define what particular kind of food that meal shall be composed of, except that a portion shall be bread and wine. The New Testament is accepted as the rule of faith and practice; but neither the New Testament nor the Historical Church define what all and what not shall be used to compose the Lord's Supper. Private judgment may decide that the elements of the Mosaic Passover alone should constitute that meal. This we understand is not at war with the fundamental principles of the Brethren church. Private interpretation decides that the Love Feast is an observance that can be scripturally kept by using any proper food, and this interpretation is not at war with any fundamental principle of the Brethren church, because it has not defined what food or varieties of food only shall constitute this Supper. Here is a difference in interpretation that are opposed to one another, and the fundamental principles of the church do not recognize the difference. In this case, in their relation to the general church, neither party has a right to raise war against the church; and if any one insists on the exclusion of any food from the feast that the Scriptures regard a proper food for man, he makes his private judgment war with the principles of the church. The only consistent course open for settlement, is for all parties concerned to submit the difference to a board of arbitration, composed of elders agreeable to both parties, and let what seemeth well to the Holy Ghost and to then be the final decision; or the one insisting on private interpretation forego his judgment, or go where his mind is satisfied.

The question of close and open communion involves the same principle—not of the fundamentals of the Brethren church—in the process of reasoning. We do not understand that those who have come into the Brethren Church have surrendered their right of private judgment on this matter, like we have on the mode of baptism. We feel that on this ordinance we have no right to exercise private judgment, because the mode is a fixed principle of the church. But on open or close communion, a principle is to be established, and as the New Testament is the rule and the Holy Spirit the guide, let that be disposed of as seems good to the Holy Ghost and the church.

The question of private interpretation, after all is the great question that the church now has to dispose of. It is the question underlying all questions. It

is the question at the bottom of the difference between the Roman Catholic and the Protestant; it is the question between the Brethren and German Baptist churches.

The Roman Catholic advocates the right of private judgment in the broadest sense outside of his church doors; but as soon as one steps inside then every liberty in that direction is taken away, and the doctrine of private judgment is disowned, denounced and vilified as illegitimate, perilous, pestiferous, and he is only allowed to think as the church thinks; and after all the church thinks only as some individual thought.

The congregational form of church government is directly the opposite to the Catholic system. It presumes to grant the right of private judgment in the broadest sense consistent with the essential requirements of society bonds.

Let us all pray that we may obtain grace from above that we may be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.

The Little Children.

Bro. Mason gives a touching account of the reception of one of the Lord's children into the church. A scene more beautiful can not engage the imagination than to behold a little lamb of Jesus pressing itself forward to the fountain of living waters, pure, harmless and innocent. The dear Saviour stands with outstretched arms, tenderly pressing his message upon the hearts of the father and mother and all—"Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not."

"Seek ye first the kingdom of heaven" is more than a mere poetic flourish. Christ meant to convey an important truth when he uttered those words upon the mountain. They did not fall dead in the valley beneath but their noise has reached unto the end of the world, and the admonition is still here to be obeyed; and happy is the child who obeys it and goes to the arms of Jesus, the sure retreat from sin and sins with him. What condescension—the majestic Jesus supping with a little child!

NOTES AND NEWS.

Bro. Brown's letter is of unusual interest because it comes from California, and tells how he escaped being wrecked in the journey.

That is an immense article that Bro. Beer writes about a convention. As we cannot have it this year, let us get a good ready to have one in a year.

On September 12th, the Cone-maugh, (Pa.) church received five members by baptism. The church and the minister, brother J. W. Smouse, feel to rejoice, and we rejoice with them.

Bro. A. A. Cober is still marching on in the work and says he has more than he can do well. As much is true of many of our workers, but a rich reward awaits all such.

That is a most encouraging letter that comes from brother Swihart. How grandly the work is opening this fall.

On the 28th, Bro. Bashor commences his meeting at North Manchester, Ind., and expects to continue over the 3rd Saturday of October. We look forward

to the commencement of his work in Indiana with much interest.

Bro. L. H. Smith of Texas desires to know the address of some of the Seventh-day Tunkers. Will some one who knows, send us the address of any one of their speakers?

Bro. Joseph Michael, of Lawrence, Kansas says, regarding the work in his locality: "My age and circumstances forbid my getting around much; wish some active brother would come and take charge of the field." Here is an opportunity for some able, young minister, who is willing to make himself useful.

This is encouraging news from brother J. H. Swihart: "Since we organized at Oakville, on the 10th, inst., one joined by relation, two have been baptized, and eleven candidates. The last eleven came out last night, (Sept. 13.) The Hall is full every evening, and the end is not yet. There are 21 in all." Bro. S. certainly must be happy over this success as he again enters the revival field.

Bro. James A. Ridenour has a long article in the drawer on Close Communion. He writes as though in his patience he meant to possess his soul. We commend a careful reading of the articles on both sides of this question by our ministers, for it depends almost wholly upon them what the practice of the different churches shall be. We have believed and do yet believe that it is our ministers' desire to follow the gospel, and that they will do so when it is known what the Gospel favors. All should be willing to do what seemeth well, and by a brotherly exchange of views we shall be able to arrive at what seemeth well. Discussions are looked upon, frequently as something terrible, and so they are when the writer indulges in insinuations, insane assertions and strains his productions with the sieve of bitterness. But when they are seasoned with love and a desire to know God's truth to obey it, no more healthy and righteous exercise can be engaged in. Teaching is argument, largely, and an examination of Christ's teaching shows that it is largely argument.

Many of our ministers are young and these important subjects should be presented to them, and such advice and admonitions written upon gospel authority as will be useful to them in deciding what is best to do. But so long as these questions of difference are suppressed for the purpose of maintaining we are unlike other churches, so long there will be an undercurrent of an assumed peace and that rent that will militate against our advancement and development.

There are only two ways to deal with such subjects. One is the known episcopal system which is to have a complete and well-defined man-made creed, and examine every applicant for the ministry and make him pledge obedience thereto and avow his intentions to enforce the same in his official work.

The other is to accept the Bible as it is, and lovingly grant to every one the right of interpretation outside of the known principles of fraternal union existing

between them, with a heart and will to do that which seemeth good.

Brethren Ministers Home Reading Circle.

As I announce the Brethren Ministers' Home Reading Circle this week, it is suggested that a few words of explanation would be in order. First, as to origin; my experience as an officer of Ashland College has taught me that our young ministers, though they may desire to improve their minds, are not able, financially, to leave their work and pay their board. As the college is not in a condition to extend aid to such persons, I have thought it would be well to advise them as to a course of reading.

The object, then, of this reading circle is to furnish a good course of reading to our young ministers who may feel the necessity of further study with the further incentive of knowing that many others are engaged in the same course of reading and that their acquirements will be compared at the close of the year. Of course it is not confined to ministers but the course will be such as will be of special interest to Bible students. The course will be about as follows: A short course in Rhetoric with occasional short essays to be sent to the secretary for correction.

A book on Extempore Speaking.

A book on English Literature.

A book on English History.

A book on Bible History.

A book on Early Church History.

A book on Moral Philosophy.

A book on Christian Evidences.

A certificate will be given at the close of the year showing the relative standing of the different readers.

The time required need not exceed one hour a day during the fall and winter months. The expense will be a small initiation fee to cover cost of stationery and printing, and the books, which will be furnished at very reasonable rates.

As to the utility of the course I would say that, with perhaps a single exception, the studies can be pursued just as well in the proposed manner as at school, and in most cases the saving of money is simply enormous.

For further particulars write to
DAVID BAILEY, Sec.
Ashland, O.

DEAR EVANGELIST:—In last week's EVANGELIST I read that "Bro. Spengler has accepted a call to the pastoral of the church at Lanark, Ill." When the article was written, it was correct. But since it has been written, matters and things have changed. I accepted the call to Lanark upon the following conditions:

First, If my church would release me.

2nd, If 1st of Nov. would suit the church at Lanark.

3rd, If a house could be procured.

The last conditions I was informed, were all right. But on the first condition is where the rub came. The little church over which I preside, unanimously remonstrated against my going away this fall, and to that remonstrance, I have yielded. To my brethren at Lanark I want to say, I hope you will not feel disappointed. I was honest in my intentions, but the appeals of